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European Union

Trade Policy Monitoring

EU Key Dates

2004

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Report Highlights:

This report outlines key dates for European Union institutions and decision-making in 2004. Enlargement and institutional changes are likely to impact the decision-making process, resulting in a slow-down in activity after May 2004.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
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The year 2004 will see major changes in the composition of the EU and the key policy-making bodies. As a result, legislative and policy activity is likely to slow down after May 2004 in many policy areas. The table below highlights the key dates and events taking place this year.

Date	Event	Further info
January 1	Ireland takes over EU presidency	http://www.eu2004.ie/
Late February	Nominations due for Commissioners from the new member states	
March 25-26	EU summit	
May 1	10 new member states join the EU (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)	See "enlargement" below
May 3-6	Last plenary session of current EU Parliament	See "Parliament" below
June 10 – 13	EU Parliament elections	See "Parliament" below
June 17-18	EU summit	
July 1	Netherlands takes over EU presidency	
July 20 – 22	First plenary session of new EU Parliament	See "Parliament" below
November 1	New EU Commission takes office; Voting weights change in the Council	See "Nice Treaty" below

Impact on Key Issues

Initiatives underway in EU agriculture and food safety policy will generally either be pushed through before May or will slip into Fall 2004 or even into 2005.

According to the Irish Presidency, the following initiatives are expected to be either agreed upon or adopted by the end of April:

- A Regulation on official feed and food controls (see GAIN report E23032, E23158)
- Pesticide MRLs (see GAIN reports E23045, E23137 and E23232)
- Feed Hygiene
- Reform of the tobacco, olive oil, cotton and hops regimes (see E23181, E23229)
- Several Regulations regarding the recovery of fish stocks and EU fisheries issues
- A Regulation establishing a system for the identification of ovine and caprine animals
- An amendment to the rules on honey production and marketing
- A Regulation on the protection of animals during transport.

In addition, the European Commission is expected to push for agreement on changes to the EU's import regime for rice (the "margin of preference").

The European Commission also expects to complete discussions on compensation to trading partners for lost trade as a result of enlargement by May 1.

Discussions are also expected to be completed on a Directive on marketing of seeds of genetically modified plants. It would amend directives 66/400/EEC, 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 69/208/EEC, and 70/458/EEC. Among other provisions, the directive would set thresholds for adventitious presence of authorized biotech varieties in conventional seed lots.

While discussions are expected to continue on sugar reform, it is not expected to be completed until the new European Parliament and Commission are in place.

Discussions are also expected to continue on the simplification of the fruit and vegetables regime, but these will continue under the new Commission and European Parliament.

Enlargement: What happens on May 1?

The new member states will join the EU's customs territory. Subject to a few remaining restrictions, goods will circulate freely within the EU's 25 member states and the EU tariff schedule will become applicable in the new member states for items imported from third countries.

The European Commission will increase from 20 to 30 members, with one new Commissioner for each new member state. There are 20 Commissioners from the existing 15 current member states due to the fact that the five largest member states each have two Commissioners. New Commissioners are not expected to have specific portfolios right away, but rather will "shadow" existing Commissioners. Portfolios will be re-assigned in November when the new Commission college of 25 members takes office. The 10 new Commissioners assigned in May from the accession countries are expected to stay on after November in the new Commission college. Names of nominees from the accession countries are already being discussed and will also be vetted by the European Parliament. So far, reports indicate that the following nominations have been made:

Czech Republic	Milos Kuzvart, currently Environment Minister
Estonia	Siim Kallas, former Prime Minister
Latvia	Sandra Kalniete, currently Foreign Minister
Lithuania	Dalia Grzbauskaite, currently Finance Minister
Malta	Joe Borg, currently Foreign Minister
Poland	Danuta Hubner, currently European Affairs Minister
Slovenia	Janez Potocnik, currently European Affairs Minister

The new member states will have full voting rights in the Council of the European Union. This body co-legislates with the European Parliament and consists of member state representatives.

The new member states will have full voting rights in management committees and regulatory committees. These committees consist of member state representatives and assist the European Commission in implementing EU policies.

Weighted voting ("qualified majority voting) per member state in the Council and committees will be adjusted to account for the new member states. A qualified majority will be 88 votes out of 124. A blocking minority will be 37 votes. Votes will be allocated as follows:

Austria	4		Latvia	3
Belgium	5		Lithuania	3
Cyprus	2		Luxembourg	2
Czech Republic	5		Malta	2
Denmark	3		Netherlands	5
Estonia	3		Poland	8
France	10		Portugal	5
Finland	3		Slovakia	3
Germany	10		Slovenia	3
Greece	5		Spain	8
Hungary	5		Sweden	4
Ireland	3		United Kingdom	10
Italy	10			

Nice treaty: What happens on November 1?

According to the Nice Treaty, when the new European Commission takes office, there will be only one Commissioner per member state, for a total of 25 Commissioners. Current speculation implies that some existing Commissioner portfolios may be split to accommodate the addition of five new Commissioners. For example, the existing "Agriculture and Fisheries" portfolio held by Franz Fischler, could be split into two separate portfolios of "Agriculture" and "Fisheries." Commissioner Fischler is not expected to stay on for a third term in the Commission College. There has also been speculation that other current portfolios could be split in two, such as "Energy and Transport" and "Health and Consumer Protection."

Weighted voting ("qualified majority voting) per member state in the Council and committees will be adjusted again. A qualified majority will be 232 votes out of 321. A blocking minority will be 90 votes. In addition, member states voting in favor must represent at least 62% of the EU population. Votes will be allocated as follows:

Austria	10		Latvia	4
Belgium	12		Lithuania	7
Cyprus	4		Luxembourg	4
Czech Republic	12		Malta	3
Denmark	7		Netherlands	13
Estonia	4		Poland	27
France	29		Portugal	12
Finland	7		Slovakia	7
Germany	29		Slovenia	4
Greece	12		Spain	27
Hungary	12		Sweden	10
Ireland	7		United Kingdom	29
Italy	29			

European Parliament: How many Parliamentarians per member state?

When the new European Parliament takes office, out of a total of 732 Parliamentarians, the number per member state will be allocated as follows:

Austria	18		Latvia	9
Belgium	24		Lithuania	13
Cyprus	6		Luxembourg	6
Czech Republic	24		Malta	5
Denmark	14		Netherlands	27
Estonia	6		Poland	54
France	78		Portugal	24
Finland	14		Slovakia	14
Germany	99		Slovenia	7
Greece	24		Spain	54
Hungary	24		Sweden	19
Ireland	13		United Kingdom	78
Italy	78			

Note that for the last session of the existing Parliament on May 3-6, 2004, the 162 current observer parliamentarians from the new member states will be able to vote as these countries will have become full members of the EU on May 1.

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E24005	EU adapts timing of 2004 US rice TRQs to suit EU accession	01/07/04

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